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Local News

28 people at Saskatoon care home test positive for COVID-19

"It's my 85-year-old father, right? That's the thing, and there's a great deal of helplessness that comes with that."

Lynn Giesbrecht

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As of Nov. 21, a total of 14 long-term care facilities, assisted living facilities and seniors residences were listed by the provincial government as active outbreaks. PHOTO BY LUTHERCARE COMMUNITIES

Twenty-eight people associated with Luther Special Care Home in Saskatoon have tested positive for COVID-19 after an outbreak was declared at the home less than a week ago.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

The Saskatchewan Health Authority declared an outbreak at the home on Tuesday, Nov. 17. According to an email sent to residents' families on Friday, 27 residents at the care home's Temperance and Munroe neighbourhood have tested positive for novel coronavirus.



In an emailed statement sent to the Leader-Post on Saturday, LutherCare Communities said it "can confirm there are 28 positive cases of COVID-19 associated with Luther Special Care Home."

Ivan Olfert, operations lead for LutherCare Communities, said in a Thursday news release that "we are taking every precaution necessary to contain the virus, with the health and safety of our residents and staff remaining our top priority."

On its website, Luther Special Care Home is described as having "129 beds for level 3 and 4 care, including a secure 49-bed dementia care unit."

Greg Meldrum said he received a call on Saturday morning that his 85-year-old father, who has dementia, is one of the residents who tested positive.

Meldrum had feared that phone call would come after he received an email on Nov. 14 saying a staff member had tested positive. Over the next week, he received emailed updates saying that two residents had tested positive, then six residents. Finally on Friday evening he heard that the case count was up to 27.

Receiving the news that his father had tested positive, Meldrum said he felt anxious and very helpless because there was nothing he could do to help.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

“It’s my 85-year-old father, right? That’s the thing, and there’s a great deal of helplessness that comes with that,” he said.

“Our family is one of thousands across the country that are going through the same thing, have gotten the same phone calls, and you just pray that your loved one is strong enough to get through it.”

Staff at the care home told him that so far his father is doing well, but Meldrum knows that his father’s age and underlying medical conditions put him at much higher risk of severe illness or death.

His experience with the care home has been nothing but positive and he knows staff are providing his father with the best care they can. Still, he worries about the staff and the pressure they are now facing.

“This is a facility that was doing everything they could to prevent it from coming in,” he said.

“Can you imagine treating somebody with COVID that’s almost non-communicative at times? Can you imagine what they’re going through, those health care workers and care aids?”

Tracy Zambory, president of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, has been imagining what health care workers in long-term care facilities are going through as the list of outbreaks in those facilities across the province grows. And it’s not a pretty picture.

“The members that are there are scared. The families are devastated. They followed all the rules and their worst nightmares are coming true,” Zambory said in a Saturday interview.

“They didn’t think there could be anything worse than what there is right now, and I don’t think we’ve

seen anything yet. I think it's going to become worse."

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

As of late Saturday afternoon, a total of 14 long-term care facilities, assisted living facilities and seniors residences were listed by the provincial government as active outbreaks. This includes the Lutheran Sunset Home in Saskatoon and the Santa Maria Long-term Care Home in Regina, which were declared as outbreaks on Friday.

Wolseley Memorial Integrated Care Centre, also known as Lakeside Home, is also on the list after an outbreak was declared there on Thursday.

That's where Terry Pon's mother lives, although so far his mother has not tested positive.

"I'm very frightened. I'm not certain of the details. I don't know if I want to know, but I just want to make sure that my mom's safe and that she's comfortable," Pon said.

"It's very frustrating of course, knowing that it has entered into the care home situation, given the amount of mortality that has taken place in other provinces."

He was informed of the outbreak late Thursday evening and told that all residents would be in isolation in their rooms and tested twice for COVID-19 over the coming days. At the time, Pon said he was told two people connected to the home had tested positive.

As a teacher in Regina, Pon knows he is exposed to many people on a regular basis and so has not been to visit his mother since school started again in September.

He had been hopeful that he, along with his wife and two children, would be able to visit his mother over the Christmas holidays, but he no longer believes that's an option.

"I just think that's off the table. I'm pretty certain they won't want my family in there," Pon said. "It's just not going to happen."

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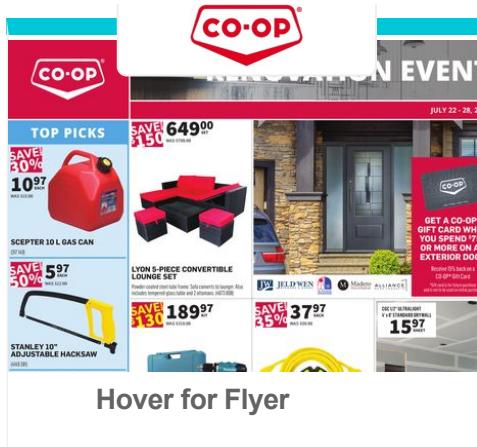
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